

Ticino Canton, Switzerland

Monte Bre over Lugano

General overview

Located in the southern part of Switzerland, Ticino is one of the 26 cantons of the country. It covers an area of 2812 km² and has almost 350 000 inhabitants (1). Ticino is the only canton where Italian is the official language, while in the other Swiss cantons it is French, German, or Romansh. Ticino benefits from its strategic geographic position between the Swiss Alps and Italy, representing a crucial corridor for road traffic along the European north–south axis. On the other hand, this situation negatively impacts the quality of the environment and mobility in the region.

Life expectancy in Ticino (83.8 years in 2015–2016) is above the national average (83.1 years in 2015–2016) (2), but, at the same time it has the greatest ageing index of all cantons (2016: Ticino – 164.2; Switzerland – 121.4) (3). In 2012, 74% of the population considered that their health was good, or very good, but data for health perception and physical activity indicators showed much lower rates for Ticino than for the rest of the country (4).

As a consequence of Swiss federal principles, all cantons have the privilege of shaping their own internal policies and regulations to some extent.

The health system is regulated by the Swiss Federal Law on Compulsory Health Care (LAMal) whereby every resident is provided compulsory health insurance. This is covered by private health-insurance companies, resulting in a market based on competition among these companies. Responsibility for financing, organizing and delivering health-care services lies, on the other hand, within the 26 cantons. Switzerland's health system is very well developed and peculiar to the country.

Despite this competition-based model, health costs continue to grow: in 2014, Switzerland allocated 11.6 % of its gross domestic product to health care compared to 9.6% in 2007. The trend also includes a steady increase in health-insurance premiums and, therefore, in total health expenditure per capita (in 2014, US\$ 7096 purchasing power parity (PPP) in Switzerland compared to an average of US\$ 3735 PPP in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries). Unfortunately, the proportion of total health expenditure allocated to disease prevention and health promotion in Switzerland (2.5 % in 2014) is below the average of that allocated in the OECD countries (2.8% in 2014) (5).

Based on the national strategy against noncommunicable diseases adopted in 2016, the Ticino Canton has developed a health-promotion programme for 2017–2020, which includes programmes on nutrition, physical activity, tobacco and alcohol, as well as intersectoral projects related to migration, environment, mental health and sustainable mobility.



Strengths

The strengths of the Ticino Canton are:

- ✓ long life expectancy;
- ✓ high quality, accessible health services;
- ✓ a high level of democracy and participation;
- ✓ a low level of corruption;
- ✓ social security;
- ✓ environmental preservation.



Aspirations

Ticino Canton's aims include the development of:

- ✓ a strategy for and interventions on health promotion, focusing particularly on youth smoking, binge-drinking and physical activity;
- ✓ multisectoral approaches to developing slow mobility, green urbanism and climate adaptation;
- ✓ indicators on health status, health perception and healthy behaviour.



Challenges

The main challenges in the Ticino Canton are:

- ✓ high expenditure for basic health insurance;
- ✓ the presence of linguistic and cultural minorities;
- ✓ the social and political tension associated with increasing numbers of cross-border workers and immigration;
- ✓ public health policy too much health-care-system oriented;
- ✓ the absence of an evaluation culture (policies/ measures taken);
- ✓ poor intersectoral collaboration in public administration.



Potential areas of collaboration

Ticino would be interesting in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ promoting behavioural change in a life-course perspective;
- ✓ developing gender- and culture-oriented health-promotion interventions;
- ✓ adapting the environment and health strategy to include climate change;
- ✓ promoting health in small communities.



Working groups

Ticino would be interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ environment;
- ✓ women's/men's health;
- ✓ participatory approaches/resilience.



People active in Regions for Health Network (RHN)

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